

One Last Night...

A Work of Fiction by Bryson McCarthy

It's hard to stand outside a place that you have come to love over the last four years and know deep down inside that this is probably going to be the last time you will ever walk through the doors. No one knows. They all think it's just a regular night. No one knows what I'm feeling, but by the time I play that last song ... hell, they won't know shit until they walk through these doors that I'm staring at and realize that I'm not in that booth anymore.

People take it for granted. It's so easy until it all goes to shit.

I feel bad. I'm gonna walk through that door and everyone is going to think that it's all cool. I hope they do. They don't know me at all, and if they did, they would have seen it on my face for the last few weeks. A job that used to be fun has become what it never was before: a job. When work becomes work, it isn't worth doing anymore!

Some will see the Punisher shirt, signifying a little bit of a hard edge to the festivities, but the rest, the drunken fools who think that only Top 40 Boy Band, Britney Swill is the only music I should play, will just be muttering, "Shit, it's the mean DJ again."

I have no problem being known as the mean DJ. The people who think I'm mean are the close-minded fools who can't see past their own pathetic existence, forgetting that even though they think a certain song is good, I've been sitting in that booth for over four years now without a complaint by the management as to what I play and how I play it. That is, until this year.

That's it. I'm going in.

Smile for the crowd.

Make them think you love it here.

Then hit them with a little For Whom the Bell Tolls followed by Get in the Ring and let them know who really controls the music they're going to listen to. I should have made up that sign I always joked about:

"I'm not here to play your music; you're here to listen to what I'm playing."

Some people take that as a harsh statement, but it's true. You don't show up because the DJ is a nice guy, or because he always smiles at you when he sees you walk by. You go to the bar to hear specific DJs because of their style and what they play to you, not for you! If people would just stop and think about their requests before coming up to the DJ booth, things would be so much simpler.

Great. I thought I would at least get into my booth and close the door before the new management came over to give me what she thinks is a little pep talk. It's funny; I have to give her respect since she is my superior, but she baby-sits me and talks down to me every time she opens her mouth.

"Did you see my note?"

As if I'm blind and retarded, I guess. It's not hard to miss a big white piece of paper stuck to the top of a big black CD player. But I guess when you miss bartenders siphoning drinks to their friends, it's easy to think that everyone else has selective vision as well.

I'm just going to give her the look. Smile and Wave. The Headstones have taught me well. All I have to do is Smile and Wave.

"We have a promo tonight and I need you to be nice on the mic"

Here we go again. Be nice to the drunken morons and supposedly they'll be courteous back. Funny thing is that it never

turns out that way. You try to be nice and the two brain cells that aren't intoxicated decide which three swear words would sound coolest to call the DJ just before they ask you to play their music.

"Did you hear me? I want you to be nice on the microphone. No calling people names. You can't tell them they are stupid or retarded, even if they are."

Funny thing is she says exactly what I do, only she does it behind closed doors. She has no respect for the patrons. She only wants them to come and spend money at the bar. She doesn't care at all! That's why she keeps asking me and the other guys to kill the dance floor with a shit song every hour or so to force them back up to the bar to spend more of their student loans on Screwdrivers and pitchers. Too bad they don't go to the bar; no, they come straight to the DJ booth to complain about the shit music.

"There were complaints last week about the things you said."

Of course, these were by people who either had a personal problem with me that stems from things outside this bar, or they were stupid and didn't like to be reminded of it.

"Remember. When you're in this bar, you are an employee and you better listen to what I say."

Don't worry. That'll be fixed within a few hours.

"The Beer Company wants you to promote their product every couple of songs..."

Yeah, that's legal.

"...and they said that you don't promote their contests enough."

Maybe if their promo girls weren't stealing the prizes and the head rep wasn't drunk and trying to get laid, I'd help them out.

"I want you to read from that page I gave you word for word tonight."

ME... DJ... WORDS... TOO

HARD...

"Do you understand me?"

Smile and Wave.... Smile and Wave.

Look at her walk around this place as if she created it. She has no idea about the history behind this bar and why it's so busy. These people are here regardless. They want to hear certain songs, not beer commercials every five minutes.

Sure, I interact with the crowd in a different way than most, but at least I'm not a corporate sellout.

The crowd's getting a little larger. No one has come up here to...wait, what the fuck does that say?

"Let's try for some professionalism in the DJ booth for once!"

Yeah, good way to put me in a bad mood at the beginning of my shift. Who leaves their head DJ a note saying that he's unprofessional? I've been doing this since she was in her first year of university. Hell, I was here reviewing music for the paper and getting kicked off the radio station when she was still in high school, trying to fit in with the little preppy kids.

I was gonna to give her two weeks notice, but that would be professional. And according to her, that's something I'm not!

When you've been here as long as I have, you can just look around the bar and know exactly what people want to hear. The pool tables are full of our regulars, drinking out of their pitchers and talking loud. They

don't want to hear the latest Destiny's Child song. They want rock! They want Metallica, G 'n' R, Pearl Jam, AC/DC and even a little Pantera to get the night off to a good start.

There's a group up on the stage area, starting their night of fun. You can see the mixed drinks in front of the girls and the guys hovering around them with beer in hand, hoping somebody drinks one too many and actually wants to go back to their pig-sty room and maybe have a little drunken sex with someone who was probably downloading porn and polishing off another sample of hand cream only two hours ago.

The group at the bar is there to look cool. They order their drinks, but they're mostly known as Nursing Students. They nurse their drinks until they either have to sip that last little flat bit or actually buy a drink between poses. They don't care what they hear as long as they hear at least one song that reminds them of some drunken event in their rez, or music that reminds them of days before university when all they had was a Discman and a Big Shiny compilation to keep them cool.

The second the tables nearest the dance floor start to fill up is when I know I have maybe two songs before some little 19 year old comes over here and tries to convince me that she knows exactly what I should play and when. They think they have such a great knowledge of music. And maybe they do, but they should have really used just some of that brain power to actually notice that the Frosh 15 has already attacked their ass and the jeans that used to make them look good on the dance floor now attracts attention of another kind. They may think they're the bomb, but most are afraid that they're just going to blow out of their pants.

It's like they don't have mirrors in rez.

If this is going to be it, they're gonna have to suffer through some classics. I love this job for the fact that I can play music that I want to hear and maybe actually convert a few people into a different musical mindset. *Lola* should work, followed by some Bowie, and then just to mess with their heads, I'll hit them with some Manson. *I Don't Like the Drugs but the Drugs* — oh, here they come. Round One!

"Hi. I was wondering when you were going to start playing good music?"

Translation: I hate what you're playing and I am going to insult you so that you'll play what I want to hear because I think I'm hot!

"No one in here wants to hear what you're playing right now."

Translation: even if some moron requested this, I don't care, because I know best.

"Can I at least make a few requests? I want to hear mmmm ... mmmm ... mmmmmmm"

It's so much fun tuning them out. I know that every request she's asking for is the complete rundown of the MuchMusic Top 40. As if I don't play that crap every week. Go back to your table of popularity and self-centered celebration. Everyone else hates you anyway.

I used to snap at these people in years past. The second someone insulted me I would throw it back in their face. Would you go up to a bouncer and tell him he sucks and



expect not to have your face bashed in, or would you go up to a bartender and tell them they suck, expecting to ever be served again? So why do they think they can come up to a DJ and tell him he sucks, his music sucks and that he doesn't know what he's doing, then ask him if you can make a request? It's sheer stupidity!

Would I walk up to one of these girls and say *'Hey, you're pretty ugly, but you wanna get together later tonight and see what happens?'* and actually expect to get laid? If you want something, you don't insult the person first. It's the first rule of talking to a DJ. If you piss him off you aren't hearing the new J-Lo track within the next four hours.

I can't tell them off anymore. Customer service, you know. They won't come back if you're mean to them. Funny thing is, most of these kids have drinking problems and if I killed and screwed their mothers (in that order), they would be back at this bar the following night for another night of alcohol-induced pleasure.

Time for a classic set. *Sympathy for the Devil*, *Sweet Emotion*, *Gallows Pole*, *Low Rider* and *Paranoid*. That should keep the Nurses and the Pool Sharks happy for the time being.

Speaking of the Pool Sharks, I'm supposed to try to play dance music for most of the night to keep the customers happy and spending their money. And yet, supposedly, the Go-Go Girls are more important than the Pool Sharks. There are more requests from the Pool Sharks in the first two hours, and if you really look at it, the Pool Sharks drink one pitcher of beer for every mixed drink the Go-Go Girls buy. I think prioritizing the customers by their drinking habits is stupid, but if you're going to walk into a bar you've never been in and tell the vets to basically shit on your best customers, well, that's not good customer service. Damn...Round Two already!

"Hey. This sucks!"

So do you honey, but I'm not telling you something that everyone in this bar already knows.

"Play something good."

I am. It's just that you have no taste in music other than what the radio and television tell you to like, so anything released before 1999 is old and crappy in your small little mind.

"We came here to dance and we'll leave if you don't start playing something good, like, now."

Then leave. There is a line-up of about 75 to 100 people waiting to get in here and most of them know I'm DJing and have no problem with it. Hey, I'll even call you a cab if you leave right now.

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Yes... this is some pretty screwed up shit!!!

A line-up is beginning behind this girl and she actually thinks I'm going to just hit stop on this song and put in Justin Timberlake. Move so others can make their requests.

Of course, she's still babbling about something, but I am already sizing up the next three requests. The two girls behind her come here every week and they think that asking for the most obscure songs ever is funny. I'd club them like baby seals if I could, but hey, customer service!

The next guy is a regular who has a totally different taste in music than me. He tries every week to get me to play his favorite band which I have no albums for. Shit; it looks like he has a burnt CD in his hand. Smart little bastard. Too bad I've got that covered as well.

"Sorry man, but our CD players won't play that type of CD."

God, I love that one!

The next guy looks like he's going to be fun. Backwards hat, baggy jeans, and that 'Down With My Homies' look on his face. Too bad we all know he comes from the suburbs and Daddy paid for his new Nikes with some more of his white-bread income.

"Yo, man. You gonna throw down sa' hip hop in this ma'fucka or what, man?"

I can only laugh. It must suck to be born without an identity of your own.

"Yo, man. The peeps wanna hear some down-ass shit. You got that new Nelly track, or that slammin' Eminem cut, man?"

Just another Top 40 slave disguised in Urban GAP.

"Yo, man. You should hook up sa' turntables in here and really tear things up. I got a set in rez that I could use down here that wold make people say DAMN!"

Translation: I actually hooked my Mickey Mouse record player to my speakers and I can speed songs up with my little white fingers!

GO AWAY!

Maybe I should start moving away from rock music, but the crowd doesn't really seem ready yet. I've been doing this for long enough to know that these few requests will get all five of them on the dance floor for maybe three songs, then they'll get bored and go drink, leaving me with a dead dance floor. I don't care what anyone says; an empty dance floor is the sign of a shit DJ.

Here she comes again. Time for another lesson in music from someone who studied business and can't even get the CD player to work without help.

"I think you should start the dance floor soon."

I don't.

"Just start playing some popular songs and they will start dancing soon."

That's not the way it works.

"And I haven't heard you promote the contests once on the microphone," she says as she picks up my mic and shoves it in my face. Dumb move.

"Hey all you drunks out there. The Beer Company is here again with some shit to give away tonight so all you have to do is find the rep and buy him a drink and he will give you anything you want. We have ballots in front of the DJ booth for you to win a private party here in the bar for you and 50 of your closest friends. I can't win so I really don't care."

"That isn't exactly what I meant."

Funny, it came out exactly as I planned it to.

"Can you maybe stop the thrash music and play something a little quieter? I've got a headache and this is way too loud."

Anything you wish, my little princess. Who cares that we're already over capacity and the music needs to be loud so people can hear it. But you have a headache. You should be more worried about the Liquor Inspector showing up and seeing that we have more than our legal capacity in here and shut us down.

"There's a pretty big line-up out there. If you get these people on the dance floor then we can pack more into the bar area."

Translation: the more we can get in there, and the more they spend, and the more secure my job is next year.

Three more songs and I'll start the dance floor. These ones have to count. They're probably the last metal songs I will ever play down here. *Sad But True...Mrs. Brownstone...* and just to screw with their heads, I'll hit them with some Motorhead. Why not? No one has come up here to complain for over two minutes now.

Here they come. Requests should have to be made over the microphone so that everyone can hear just how stupid most of them are. Plus it would stop people from asking for the same shit over and over. It would be like some new Reality Bar where everyone hears what you say no matter what. That, or I should just have a big sign that says "NO STUPID REQUESTS", but in their minds, their request is better than anyone else's.

It's textbook. They ask the same shit every week:

"Can you play that new song? You know, by that guy?"

"Can you play that song that says something about

sex in it? You know the one, man. Hook me up."

"Can you play the new Britney song?"

"Can you play the new Britney Spears song?"

"I requested a song like 15 minutes ago. Are you going to play it or what?"

"Can you play the new Britney song?"

"Do you have the new Britney song?"

"The new Britney song. Do you have it?"

"The DJ last week played it."

"Are you actually going to play good music tonight?"

"Can you play some Britney?"

"If I brought you a CD of good music, you'd play it all, right?"

"Hey, you told me like five minutes ago you were going to play my song. Are you gonna play it or what?"

They wonder why DJs have a set of headphones on at all times. It's so we can listen to our own music while their crap is playing. Hell, I've turned them up so many times on people that I haven't actually listened to a request for at least a month now. You just have to give them one of three lines:

- 1) If I can find it, I'll play it.
- 2) If I can fit it in, no problem.
- 3) That disc got scratched and it skips. I'll try to burn a new copy for next week.

No one has ever caught on that these lines all mean the same thing: you'll never hear that song as long as I'm in this booth!

Well, it's time to sell out and play some dance music. This is where a whole new level of stupidity begins.

Everyone looks at DJing as a simple job. Every one of these monkeys thinks they could do it in a heartbeat. I've seen so many DJs come and go from this booth, most of whom are shocked at how hard it is to keep the majority of the people happy. It's the reason you never really see a DJ smile. They may give you that fake little smile, but after 30 minutes in the booth, they just want to go home.

It's really easy to look at the Top 40 lists online and make sure that you have that music, but that is only a small part of DJing. The Top 40 songs will only get you so far.

On a weekly basis, there are only ten songs that people want to hear, and they will keep coming back to get you to play them. These songs are like gold to the DJ, as they are a guaranteed hit and will pack the dance floor. A rookie would use these songs right away to try and get people on the dance floor, leaving himself open for an empty floor later on in the night.

You have to take the top ten songs that you know they want and spread them out over the entire night. When you have over three hours to fill with dance music, you don't throw down your aces right away. I won't play anything on the Top 40 list until at least five or six songs in. Warm them up before you hit them hard. Most of these fools need to get out there and get a little drunker before they dance like crazy.

There are also the old favorites that are a guaranteed drunken party. You have to wait until at least midnight or later to use these songs, but shit like *Billy Jean*, *You Shook Me All Night Long*, *Pour Some Sugar on Me*, *Sweet Caroline*, *Brown Eyed Girl* and even a little *The Night That Patty Murphy Died* will make them dance, sing and have a great time. The only problem with these songs is there is always that small crowd that thinks they are too cool for songs like that and don't understand why there are 150+ people dancing.

"Can you maybe play something that was made within the last decade?"

Translation: I'm self-centered.

"My mom listens to this stuff."

I know, she asked me over breakfast to make sure to piss you off tonight.

"Turn this shit off and play some Britney."

God, I hate the Britney army! It's like the Special Olympics with only one event: dancing like whores.

The funny thing about this bar is, as I've learned over the years, it isn't as much a club as it is a pub. People don't want to hear harsh beats and remixed crap as much as they want to hear songs that they like and can sing and dance to. The best proof of that is Ice Cube. Every week they want to hear *You Can Do It*, and it never kills the dance floor. The song has been in my play list for as long as I have been here, and if I forget to play it, they get pissed off.

The staff down here complains at the end of the night that I play the same stuff every night, but I have to. You can't change the style that the bar patrons have gotten used to just because the bouncers and bartenders don't like hearing a certain song every time they work. I hate three quarters of the songs I'm playing as well, but this is the shit that works, and I know it. It's my job to know it.

Great, the manager's walking around again. She simply doesn't have any managerial presence at all. She gets shoved around by the patrons all the time and doesn't do anything about it. Customer service, you know.

That's right. Smile and wave at me as if you don't have a hundred things to complain about to me right now. And what happened to your headache? The music is even louder now, but I guess it's only the music she doesn't like that gives her a headache. This shit gives me a migraine but I play it to keep the sheep happy.

I haven't had anyone to laugh at yet. This'll be easy. Next song I'll play Nelly's *Ride Wit Me* and let the fun begin.

The track's starting...where's my little fishy? Here she comes. Typical drunk Go-Go girl.

"Can you play the new Nelly track?"

I am playing Nelly.

"I know, but it would be cool if you could play the new one right after this one."

Really? I always thought a DJ who played two songs by the same artist back-to-back was shit, but you know best, honey! Later.

"People really want to hear the song. Can you play it soon?"

A mind reader! She knows what the people want! I must follow her as my leader.

It always works. You play a track by an artist that has a Top 40 hit and they all come up to request the newer track. Hey, why don't I just do an entire Britney/Nelly hour and forget that there are artists out there who are more talented.

"Hey."

Damn, didn't even see her coming.

"It's my friend's birthday. Can you give a shout-out to her from the Fifth Green Horny Toads in rooms 517 and 522 and tell her that Jizz-Pop, Sandi-San, The Great Mel-Gun and Peetie all wish her the best? Her name's Caroline, but can you say to Pukey the Dog-Faced Girl? She'll know who you mean!"

She lost me at 'shout-out.'

"Are you gonna do it?"

Only if you get out of my face.



"Can you repeat it back to me?"

Sure. Hey, some bitch thinks she's great because it's her birthday and her moronically-named friends want to pretend like they really like her by driving the DJ nuts. How's that?

I hate birthday shout-outs. If you do it for one person, then everyone in the bar wants you to do it for them. And the second you play the person's song, they come up with more and more "funny" songs for you to play for them. I only have two birthday songs: *Short Dick Man* and *Put it in Your Mouth*. They don't come back after that.

The dance floor has been pretty full so far, so I don't have to pull out the big guns yet. Sometimes the crowd is a little off and the only thing that keeps them happy is old-school rap. I love playing it, but if you do it at the wrong time, it can backfire.

Everyone wants a different style and complains when you change from that to newer stuff.

"Can you play some hip-hop?"

"Are you gonna play some rap?"

"You got any house in there, man?"

"We want music we can dance to."

"You got anything with a harder beat? You know, club style?"

"Hey, can you play some Dave Matthews?"

This last guy is the dumbest of the bunch. There's always some fool who thinks that after an hour or so of straight dance music, I'm going to play something that only he wants to hear and will send everyone back to their tables in a confused frenzy, or up here to complain. Rule #2: Don't ask for a completely different style when the DJ is playing dance. That's just stupid!

There's a group forming around the booth who thinks that it's cooler to stand near the music and pose as if they have something to do with it. It drives me nuts. They'll request music every minute or so and complain about every song they don't like. They have no patience and want to hear all their songs right away. They're mainly the same as all the others, but more vocal. That's why I have my list.

I know I'm not the only DJ who does this. I have a book where I scribble down their requests as if I care, but on the next page is a made-up list of about thirty songs, all popular ones, that I tell people is my request list, and that I have to follow it exactly as it is. Of course, if they looked closely, half the songs on the list have already been played, but they don't know that.

The list is the greatest thing ever. All I do is hold it up and say, "This is how many requests I already have. I'll try to get to yours, but it may take a while." They fall for it every time.

The night's wearing on and I think this'll be the end. I've been here for four years now and the lack of respect is wearing

away at me. I could handle it for the first while, since they were just drunk customers who didn't know any better, but it's gotten worse.

The crowd is younger now, and with a chip on their shoulder. It seems like a different generation. I can look through the crowd and only find a handful of people who still have the same views of music as I do. These kids are just a new generation of sheep. They flock to the Billboard lists and graze there for eternity. You'd think they would get sick of certain songs, but I guess repetition keeps things simple for them.

I know that, at the end of the night, they are all generally happy with what they heard. That's why they keep coming back. They complain, but they also want to know who's DJing before they even consider going out. They always come here and - great, now what?

"A few people came up to the bar and complained about you."

Show me who they are and I'll tell them exactly where to go.

"They said that you won't play their song."

Let me guess: Madonna.

"They said you told them *Like a Prayer* is banned and you won't play it. There are no banned songs down here. You have to play what they want to hear. Play it next!"

I hate that song. It's the bane of my existence. For four years now, they have been begging me for that damn song. Sure, the beat is good, but do I really want to see every single girl in this place on the dance floor posing like Madonna and screeching at the top of their lungs to a song they think they know, even though those last six shots they drank have taken any and all remnants of the lyrics from their heads. It's too long and annoying to play. Fire me. I'll walk out with all my CDs and then she can try to explain to the crowd why there will be no music for the rest of the night. Maybe they'll go to the bar and buy more drinks, or they'll walk with me and go somewhere the DJs are treated like human beings.

"You're playing Madonna next!"

No more Mister Nice Guy. She tells me that I shouldn't put up with the annoying requests by belligerent people, but then she comes in here and acts just like they do, only under the guise of management.

"I want to see you put that CD in the player."

She has no idea what she's in for!

I can't believe my hands are betraying me, but I have to put the song on. I press play and cringe at the reaction. The crowd is split between excited drunken Go-Go Girls that run to the dance floor, body parts flailing, forgetting that the floor may be a little slippery and wiping out a quarter of the dance floor with their stupidity, and the rest who know that this song should only be used in extreme case of torture and look like they

would kill me if they had a chance.

This song won't play the entire way through. I have been planning this for a while now. The Madonna CD is clear with blue dots on it. It's unmistakable, except when placed beside the Stone Temple Pilots CD with green dots. The drunks will never notice.

Halfway through the song, I cut the sound and crank the mic.

"Oh shit. What happened?"

As if I don't already know.

"I don't understand it. How can you people listen to that song and actually enjoy it? That song makes my brain hurt, and listening to all of you sing along makes me wish I was clinically deaf!"

The Go-Go Girls look like they are about to revolt, so I place the fake Madonna CD in my hand.

"You want your Madonna? Here. I'll give it to you!"

You should see their faces as I smash the CD on the door of the DJ booth. Shock, horror and utter confusion - not that this is an abnormal thing for them. Now I'll just throw them the pieces and be done with it. They all think it's the Madonna CD anyway.

"Here's *Like a Prayer*... and *Like a Virgin*... and *Vogue*, *Poppa Don't Preach* and all the other crappy Madonna shit you want. I'm not playing it anymore!"

It's as if I killed their family pet. God, I love being dramatic. Welcome to my Pub. Shows are hourly at eight, ten, and one a.m.!

It's a quarter to two now, and I have already made my decision. This is it. No two weeks notice, no more Thursday nights, no more shit from these people. Actually, I've put up with these people for four years now. And honestly, I could deal with them for another four. It's the lack of respect that I'm getting. And that lack of respect is only coming in at about 5% from the patrons.

DJing should be a fun job. You get to interact with people and play the music that everyone likes. I have always known how to play the music and what to play to keep the majority of the people happy. Even if they complain about a certain style, I know they'll be back because I have played everything that 99% of the bar wants to hear.

I may sound cocky, but a DJ like me doesn't come around very often. I like all styles of music and I will play to almost anyone. I won't force unheard-of rap groups on the Pool Sharks and the Rockers when there is no use for it. I don't show up with only forty CDs, hoping that it'll do. I have two crates which could cover over 24 hours of music without any repeats. I never replay a song, which is Rule #3 for DJs: Never repeat a song, no matter how hot the girl who's asking. I know music.

Music is a funny thing. Music is a very large thing. You may know different styles, but not too many people really know music. If you can only make one group

happy, then you only know a limited amount. I could keep country fans on this dance floor all night if I really wanted, or pull off a metal night, or a Retro Party, but no one listens to those ideas. That's how you bring people in. Serve the customers something new, but give them what they want as well. There is a huge difference between customer service and serving the customers. Only some people know what that difference is.

Time for the first slow song of the night. There are only two songs I want to play to end this shit. *Slow Motion* by Third Eye Blind is one of them. They love the song but ignore the death and destruction in the lyrics. "*I am the American Psychopath!*" I love that line.

Do I wait until the end and just walk out, or do I go out in a way more befitting of my presence down here? I can't just go. I have been too loud-mouthed to just walk. I'll just introduce the next song and whatever comes out is what comes out.

The bouncers are all in their positions, watching the couples dance and grope on the dance floor. The bartenders are cleaning up between serving the last few drinks to the hardcore drinkers in the place. Everything is so peaceful. And there she is, standing behind the bar as if the night is going to end on a high note. At least it will for me.

The song is ending and Adam Sandler's *Medium Pace* is cued up. Time to make my announcement.

"You know guys, this next song was the first end-of-the-night song I ever played down here. Everyone loved it and I thought I wouldn't be asked to DJ anymore. The management back then saw it as a gutsy move, so here I am, four years later, playing the same song."

No one is really paying too much attention, but they hear me.

"I only think it's fitting that the first slow song I ever played..." - the pitch is off and I'm ready to hit it out of the park - "...is also the last song I ever play in this bar."

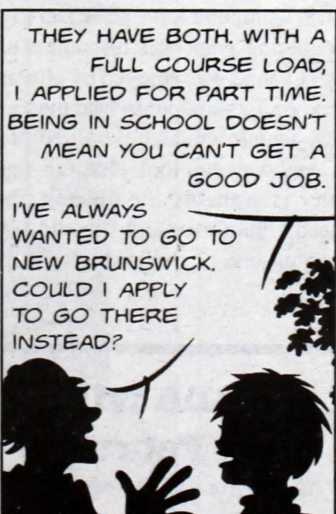
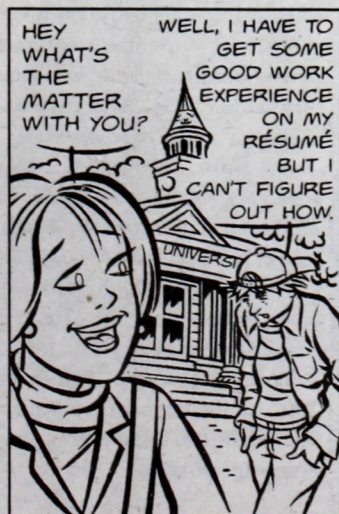
Crack... the ball is in the air.

"So make sure you enjoy it, because you won't have this DJ to push around anymore. I'm outta this shit-hole!"

Homerun, baby!

Silence. No one dares to even come over and ask me what I just did. The bartenders are staring across the bar at me in shock, and the bouncers are looking at me with a smile on their faces as they knew this was coming at some point. She's just standing there by the bar. I guess she doesn't know how to handle something like this. What a shock!

The song ends and the music stops. As I walk out the door, I hope they know, the music will never be the same again.



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Canadian Heritage
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Ontario

'Excuse me sir, but could you please move your...'

RADIOHEAD

'It's blocking my view!'

by Brian Fraser



Pablo Honey

Radiohead's 1993 debut, Pablo Honey, was the starting point of their career in the music industry. This album is comprised of more rock-type songs than their recent few albums. It also seems somewhat tame in comparison to what they do now as far as showcasing their talents is concerned. The best way to sum up Pablo Honey would be to call it a solid debut that was overshadowed by the success and quality of the next three Radiohead CDs.

Overall this is a good CD with no bad songs on it, but on the same note there are only three amazing songs; 'Creep,' 'You,' and 'Thinking About You.' The rest are still all good, but they just don't jump out at you. It is a shame that Pablo Honey got zero air time when it was released. The world was deprived of the first offering from Radiohead, but much like "Bleach" by Nirvana, the sales and popularity of Pablo Honey skyrocketed with the success of The Bends, much like the success of Nevermind helped Bleach.

Many people who have heard Pablo Honey might say that it is a bad album, but that is not the case at all. Opinions of this CD are skewed by the fact that The Bends, OK Computer, and Kid A are absolutely incredible. Compared to those CDs, yes, Pablo Honey is inferior, but it is still a good CD and worthy of being in any music collection. Also take into consideration that a debut CD in theory should not be better than their second CD. If that had been the case it would indicate that there had been no growth and they would have



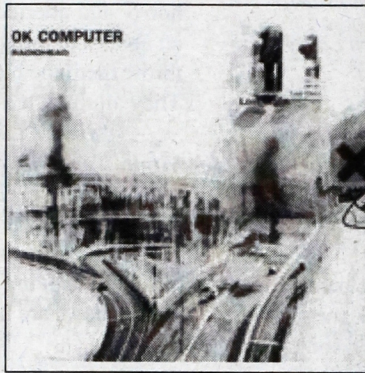
The Bends

One of the truly great albums of the 1990's. Released in 1995, two years after Pablo Honey, The Bends thrust Radiohead into the spotlight as an elite group, in not only England but the whole world.

When the hit song 'Just' hit the airwaves, people were introduced to the edgy guitar playing of Jonny Greenwood and the amazing songwriting of Thom Yorke. These two thrived and really showed the world what they could do, and I believe they have not shown us their full potential yet. For whatever reason, Greenwood and Yorke were unable to show off their talents on Pablo Honey, but this CD is the opposite. This is one of those great CDs that you can put in and all the songs are amazing. Whether you prefer to focus on the incredible guitar fills and solos or the whiney melodic vocals or the overall quality of the songs, this album has it all.

This album has had a lot of success since it hit the stores. 'Just,' 'High and Dry,' and 'Street Spirit' rose up the charts at alarming paces and 'Fake Plastic Trees,' 'My Iron Lung,' 'Sulk,' and 'High and Dry' did well on various movie soundtracks too. For most Radiohead fans this CD has some sentimental value as well. Except for the hardcore fans who happened to hear 'Creep' the three or four times it was actually on the radio, 'Just' was the first Radiohead song they heard, and thus it was the first CD of theirs they bought. I know that was the case for me when I was younger, and just like myself, the Radiohead fans got hooked on The Bends and never looked back.

Radiohead must clearly be considered one of the greatest bands of all time. They released albums that are considered poor compared to their previous releases, but all their albums are still amazing compared to almost anything produced by the music industry today. And with their next album due out soon, and a promise of a return of the influences of the older albums, only great things will come in the future for Radiohead.



OK Computer

One word: Amazing. That sums up Radiohead's third CD, OK Computer. This CD contains three of the best Radiohead songs ever; 'Karma Police,' 'Paranoid Android,' and 'Lucky.' As a whole this CD won Radiohead their first of three Grammy awards, winning the 1997 Grammy for Best Alternative Performance.

OK Computer would be a perfect transition CD from the more rock alternative style music of Pablo Honey and The Bends to the more experimental, almost techno twist of Kid A and Amnesiac. This acts as a common liking for all Radiohead fans. Some prefer the old and some prefer the newer stuff, but this album is both and thus liked by all.

Combining a great mix of slow songs and upbeat catchy numbers that exploit the talent of Jonny Greenwood is what really makes this CD a well-rounded amazing piece of music history. There are also a lot more keyboards and electronica incorporated into the songs, which is also done by the talented Greenwood, who was recently named one of the top 35 guitarists of all time.

OK Computer left Radiohead fans wondering what was to come. The newer sound was enjoyed by all and everyone was anxious to hear the next CD, which would be entitled Kid A. Any way you look at it, OK Computer is arguably the greatest Radiohead album ever and I would say arguably one of the best of all time, period.



Kid A

After a three year wait Radiohead fans were finally given the chance to hear the much anticipated new Radiohead sound. I admit I was a little disappointed when I heard Kid A for the first time; in fact I remember only liking three songs on the whole CD. But first impressions are not always as they seem. After listening to it a few more times it got to the point that I would now argue Kid A to be a musical gem and possibly Radiohead's best work to date.

The newer style that includes a whole lot more keyboard and less guitar took a little time to get used to, as I'm sure it did for most Radiohead fans who really enjoyed the older stuff. But Radiohead dared to go where no one had really gone before with this new album and the fans and music critics alike seem to enjoy the new sound. The critics liked the album so much it won Radiohead's second Grammy, this time for the Best Alternative Music Album of 2000. They were also nominated for the Record of the Year Grammy as well but lost in what was a blown call by the Academy.

The only flaw on this album is an instrumental, keyboard dominated song called 'Treefingers,' and even that song isn't that bad. It acts as a suitable lead into the following two songs; 'Optimistic' and 'In Limbo,' which are the two best songs off a stellar track list. So if it wasn't for that one less than amazing song, Radiohead would have put out what could have been called a perfect album.



Amnesiac

The fifth and most recent installment of the Radiohead discography was in 2001, with Amnesiac, or what is referred to as Kid B. Radiohead pushed the threshold of its fans again with this release. Again I was unimpressed with Amnesiac the first time I heard it, with the exception of a few amazing tracks. It has taken me a while longer for this CD to grow on me but it has.

The first single, 'Pyramid Song' is an excellent song that is loved by pretty much every Radiohead fan. Other exceptional tracks include 'You and Whose Army' and 'Knives Out,' which is a throw back to the old days of The Bends and OK Computer. The rest of the tracks are solid but not amazing, with the exception of a terrible rendition of 'Morning Bell/Amnesiac' and 'Like Spinning Plates.' These two tracks could have been left out of the mix completely and I would not care. One could argue that these are their worst songs to date and hopefully they won't attempt such songs again.

Many critics and fans came down hard on Radiohead for releasing this CD so soon after Kid A since it is basically a compilation of B-sides from Kid A, hence the nickname Kid B. Then again some critics gave it rave reviews.

Spin Magazine ranked Amnesiac as the second best CD of 2001 and Rolling Stone Magazine rated it as number 10, and the acknowledgment didn't stop there. Radiohead won the 2001 Best Recording Package Grammy as well as being named the Best Band for 2002 on the heels of Amnesiac, the second time in three years they were given this honour.

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**LAMBDA will return to normal
February 6, 2003**

As if anyone would actually consider this paper normal!!!

The Diary of RabidSquirrel

By Nick Stewart

www.Xanga.com/rabidsquirrel

○ And the Award Goes To...

It's a Game Where Everybody Loses

CONGRATULATIONS to Micheal Jackson for winning the Official Rabidsquirrel's "Weirdest Goddamn Person, Place or Thing Ever" Award! (Runners-up include "the whirligig", "your lower intestine", and "Charlton Heston")

Micheal, say hello to the nice people.



Er, close enough.

It should also be noted that Mr. Jackson also went home with the "Joke That Writes Itself" award, as well as three packets of salted peanuts and a canned ham.

In honor of his award, Jackson announced that there will be "a party in my pants", and that celebrations will begin at 9:00 P.M.

And Now, A Friendly Warning

...Of Doom. Okay, You Got Me, It's Not Really All That Friendly

Don't fear the Reaper.

You should however fear Morty, the Drycleaner of Highly Questionable Moral Standing. Rumor has it that if you accidentally offend him in some way – like, say, by casually threatening to have sex with his mother before burning down his house – he'll toss some easily irritated and generally disagreeable Communist scorpions in your freshly cleaned knickers.

Right, Mikey?



Right. Thanks for backing me up on that one, big guy.

○ Your Mother:

Coming Soon to a Truck Stop Near You!

I just got back from my cross-country tour with my band, "Your Mother", and let me tell ya, the life of a musician isn't all that it's cracked up to be.

I mean, when you start out, you imagine yourself performing in such places as, say, the ground floor of a radioactive butterscotch factory, or Ben Affleck's hollowed-out skull. The sad reality is that Your Mother ended up performing in such places as truck stop bathrooms and in the rest area of Uncle Jed's House of Tea Cozies / Grandmother Prison.

I suppose it might have worked out a little better if Your Mother hadn't been made up of a pack of escaped mental patients whose sole talents consisted of sweating, on command, like Rosie O'Donnell on a hot day.

I guess instruments might have helped too. And maybe some songs. Okay, and maybe it was a bad idea to toss flaming hobos into the crowd. Who knew?

Still, the Show Must Go On, and so I'm announcing the creation of my second band, whose name is likely to be something like "The Lazy Bladders". I'm presently accepting applications from anyone who can actually play an instrument (note: instrument must somehow consist of a live animal, preferably one that spits copiously) or sing (note: ability to sing not actually required for this position, though applicants must be able to consume the souls of gas station attendants or Bill Cosby from fifty yards; as to complement Boffo the Porno Mime's inclusion in this upcoming group, Pornographic Origami is also accepted).

Apply Today!

Despite Doctor's Orders, Hibbety-Hip-Hop, He Don't Stop He Also Insists That "The Beat Don't Stop 'Til the Break of Dawn," But I Have My Doubts

While I was out walking the Floating Head of Zog, I came across a pack of hobos who were assaulting someone with their horrendous smells and dead seagulls, whose beaks had apparently been sharpened into makeshift shivs. After chasing them all away with menacing scowls and threats of loosing Boffo the Porno Mime into their midst, I discovered that they had in fact been attacking what would seem to be an Official Old-Skool Rapper. Apparently, they were irresistibly drawn to his ratty jogging pants, his oversized floppy hat and the eighteen-pound spleen-shaped alarm clock he was wearing around his neck, which I can only assume the hobos had planned on somehow using to break into my apartment so that they could lounge naked in my bathtub. Damn naked hobos.

Since my Midget-Mulching plans had been cancelled due to a so-called "court order", I decided to try to re-introduce the Old-Skool Rapper back into his natural habitat, but he was rapidly ostracized by the Modern-Day Rappers, apparently due to "insufficient ho content." Go figure.

Matters certainly weren't made any easier by the fact that, instead of just talking, he insisted on communicating solely in Old-Skool Lyrics.

In other words, our average attempt at conversation goes something like this:

Me: "You look like you could use something to eat."

Old-Skool Rapper: "Hip-hop-hippety hop and a hip-hop-hippety doo!"

Me: *blink*

OSR: "Bip-bop, a bippety-bop-bop, go and get down and don't stop!"

Me: "Yeah. Anyway, how about getting some macaroni or something? You're looking pretty scraggly, and y--"

OSR: "I'm hippety-here, I'm hippety-there, oh Hippty Dip, I'm-a everywhere!"

Me: "Dammit, just ta--"

OSR: *starts breakdancing*

And so on.

So I took 'im in and set him up with his own room. Why the hell not? I already have a super-villain and an ultra-profane Floating Head...what's an extra Old-Skool Rapper?



Dana Glover - Testimony

By Mat

Move over Sheryl Crow, there's a new girl in town. Actually, even though this is **Dana Glover's** debut album, this girl has been around for a while now, in and out of the music business.

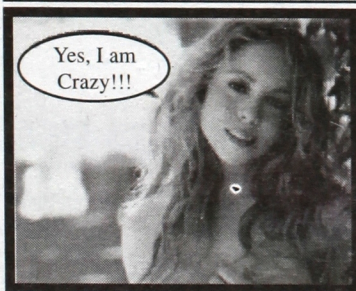
Dana Glover, a former model, originally made her mark on the music biz as back-up saxophone player on five **Peter Dinklage** albums before being signed by former band member **Robbie Robertson** to a recording contract. Even though she began her career with the sax, she has placed that aside for the more soulful sounds of the piano and her incredibly amazing voice.

Dana's sound is a great mix of blues rock and a strong gospel influence. The album borders on the contemporary Christian sound at some points, but relies more on the rock and blues side of things to really make an impact. She has a very strong presence in her songs, all of which are written by Dana herself. Probably the best way to explain how this album sounds would be a mixture of **Sheryl Crow**, **Tori Amos** and **Michelle Branch**, backed up once in a while by a gospel choir.

The songs, although performed beautifully, all seem to centre on relationships and lost love, which does get a little tiresome. If not for her amazing vocals, great piano work and her sheer beauty (guys, you need to see the pictures of Dana), a lot of these songs could be lost in the shuffle. Dana really makes the songs soar.

A few tracks that really stand out are *Rain* and *The Way* which have a very classic feel to them. You could picture these two tracks being performed in a smoky bar by someone like Ella Fitzgerald a long time ago. They have a real old-school blues sound and feel to them and with the gospel back-up they are probably two of the best tracks on the album.

The latest trend in music seems to be towards the pianist/vocalist, and as long as they keep the blues alive somewhere in their sound then they will easily break through all the other sounds out there. **Dana Glover** is a definite must have for fans of a beautiful voice, beautiful music and a true love of the modern blues.



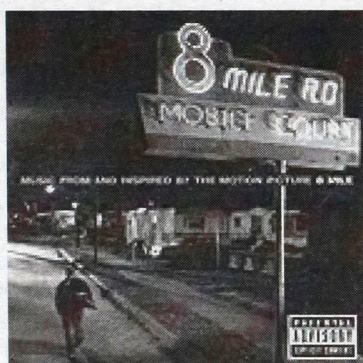
Big Shiny Tunes 7

By Hugh

With this latest installment of the **Big Shiny Tunes** franchise it makes rock fans wonder what it really takes to make this compilation? What really makes me wonder is how this CD can go on volume after volume with the fact that anyone can download and burn these tracks. Anyway, #7 certainly doesn't disappoint. There's a great flow to the CD as you begin with rock tracks from bands like **Nickelback**, **Staind**, **Puddle of Mudd** and **Theory of a Deadman**. It is certainly not a bad start to an 18 track disc. The CD then takes a step in a different direction with a more punk sound of **Sum 41**, **New Found Glory** and others.

The only thing that I found annoying about this CD is the way that they have the track listings printed. Rather than follow the traditional layout of 1-18, the cover-art designers decided to go with a weird listing. Rather than put the number 1, it's 0.1, not a big deal but it's weird at the same time.

I'd say buy this CD but anyone out there that has a burner and access to the net should just burn it and save your-self the cash.



8 Mile Soundtrack

By Hugh

Well obviously the first thing that I am going to comment on is the fact that **Eminem** has done it again with his track *Lose Yourself*. What I must give the cracker-rapper credit for is that he actually managed a hit song without overloading in profanity. The rest of the CD is loaded with out hip hop stars such as **D12**, **Jay-Z**, **Xzibit** and **Macy Grey**. But past this small set of groups there really aren't any other big names on this soundtrack.

Unless you are really in touch with the hip-hop world there won't be much that will draw you to this CD. I'll be the first to admit that I am not the most hands-on person when it comes to this brand of music so I'll go with this point for the review. If you turn this CD around and see what artists perform and you do recognize who they are, then I say buy this CD. If you turn it over and you don't know who any of the people are other than **Eminem** and **Jay-Z** then I suggest you pass on this disc and stick to what is mainstream.



Manic Street Preachers - Forever Delayed

By Mat

I have never really been a fan of **Manic Street Preachers**, so I was pleased to get a chance to listen to their first Greatest Hits compilation. *Forever Delayed* is a double disc which covers most bases for fans and newcomers. The first disc includes 20 tracks covering tracks from their beginning up to now, as well as the standard two brand new tracks. The second disc is a 13 track remix album which I will get into later.

Manic Street Preachers sound is easily describable as Brit-Rock, a little on the softer side of things. There is no real depth to a lot of the tracks, just leaving them floating along in a style that seems to be lost on much of the North American audience. I checked online as to which were the tracks to watch out for and the main tracks that were recommended as the 'best' are *Kevin Carter*, an up-beat, poppy track that sounds like something that comes from a television show; *Motorcycle Madness*, an 80's sounding pop track and the strange *If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next*. *If You Tolerate...* is one of those songs that has a title that is much more interesting than the song.

Tolerate is probably one of the most popular mainstream **Manic Street** songs that had some success this side of the ocean, but is remembered more for the fact that it's one of those songs that you just can't shake from your head. Other than the hypnotic lyrics, the song is pretty stale.

Of the entire album, the only song that really stands out for me was the only non-Manic song, an interesting Brit-pop cover of *Suicide is Painless*, the original theme from the *MASH* movie. The **Manic Street Preachers** do stay true to the words, but if you didn't know this was the theme from *MASH*, you may just think this was another original track as the music is drastically different.

The second disc, the remix album is just damn strange! **The Preachers'** style is not the type that can be remixed into club anthems very easily. **The Chemical Brothers** and **Massive Attack** seem to think it is, but unless you are a hardcore club goer, you will quickly put the CD back into its case wondering "What the hell was that?"

Other than *Suicide is Painless*, there is really nothing on this album worth your time. Unless you are a fan of the slower, quasi-80's Brit-rock style, **Manic Street Preachers** is not the band for you.



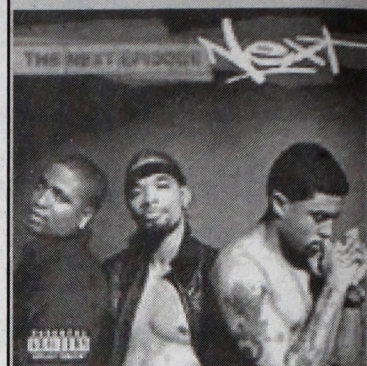
The Snitches - Star Witness

By Mat

I feel bad for this band. Really, I do. For some reason the world of music has been taken over by bands who are trying to regenerate the late 70's, early 80's sound when rock just wasn't rock anymore. Groups like **The Vines**, **The White Stripes**, **The Strokes** and now **The Snitches** are all part of this new wave rock swell. Its too bad **The Snitches** are the worst of this era.

The Snitches are like a cheap imitation of **The Vines** and all their songs sound like rip-offs of other songs that have already been released. They jump from sound to sound and track to track trying to grab a hold of the new sound, but they just can't get it right. They jump from sounding like *Elvis Costello* in *December 21* to *Big Country* on *Pinkie Standing* to just plain ripping off the different sounds of the Beatles on at least three or four tracks including *Wednesdays on my Mind*, then jumping to some cheap Morrison on *Crazy Talking Girl*.

I know it's a new sound and a new era, but I hope it's one that will pass soon and take **The Snitches** with it!



Next - The Next Episode

By Mat

Next has always been a band that can bridge the gap between R&B and Hip Hop, finding a cool ground between their club tracks and their slow jams. *The Next Episode* is a perfect example of this throughout all the tracks.

The album contains some great club tracks including *Do Your Thing*, *Just Like That* and the stand-out *I'm Trying to Wait* which will remind you of *Too Close*. What really dominates this album is the slow jams. **Next** moves from mid-tempo to downright bump and grind tracks throughout. *Imagine That*, *Lights Out*, *It's Okay* and *Brand New* are all fantastic slow jams, but it's the final track *Freaky Man* that will have people sticking and sweating all night long. This is the first track to be dominant to *Silk's Freak Me*. If I was still DJing this would be the final song every night.

Next never disappoints and if you pick this up along with the **Deborah Cox** album, you will hit new heights of sensuality!

Leanne Rimes - Twisted Angel

By Mat

The little country princess has grown up and is now trying to move into the same territory as *Britney* and *Christina*. Well, she hasn't had any enhancements and hasn't decided to go on a British children's television show in a thong, but she has moved into the pop arena with a more sensual sound, leaving behind her country 'blue' roots.

Twisted Angel is a departure from her old style, but she really won't lose too many fans as her sound is more along the lines of adult contemporary pop than it is Top 40 Pop. Her music has a safer sound and feeling to it, much easier on the ears and not so pounding and clubby.

Much of the album centers on her softer side, slowing things down to try and create a more sensual, seductive aura around the former country queen. She does reach into that arena with the tracks on the album, but she comes off as a little bit of a tramp if you look inside the CD booklet and see pictures of her in different states of undress (as if I'm complaining about that). Her photo shoot looks more like a cheap photo shoot between a boyfriend and his half drunk girlfriend with an instamatic camera.

Life Goes On is the first single, released to radio and television just before Christmas. The track is a good foray into the pop culture, but most of the tracks on the album aren't good follow-up tracks. Don't get me wrong, there are some great songs on the album, but most aren't breakout pop tracks. *Trouble With Goodbye* may have a shot, but it's tracks like *The Safest Place* that will really garner her some attention.

The Safest Place is a great slow song that really shows that *Leanne* has finally grown up and can put some sensuality and emotion into her songs. She sounds like a woman more than a child on that track which is something that she needs to break away from her original public persona.

Although she will always have that country sound in her voice, **Leanne Rimes** has recorded a pretty good break-away album in *Twisted Angel*. The best thing that will probably come from this album is that she hasn't alienated her fans, but she has recorded some interesting tracks to bring in a whole new wave of listeners.

WANTED!!!



Name: Zwan (aka Smashing Pumpkins II)

By Ray McGregor

I remember many years ago when the CD first became popular, and I desperately wanted a new CD player for Christmas. I was not disappointed when the day came that I unwrapped my new ghetto with a CD player built in. No longer would I have to listen to my tape player that constantly ate my best tapes. The only problem was that I now needed a CD to listen to. My very first CD was a gift from my older sister. When I unwrapped it she told me it was a band that most of her friends had really liked. I had never heard of this band before but decided to give it a listen anyway. On that cold Christmas morning many years ago, I instantly became a fan of a nasal Billy Corgan and the Smashing Pumpkins. Siamese Dream was and still is my favorite CD of all time. Songs like Today, Cherub Rock, Disarm, and Rocket still hold up now in a time when music has taken on many different forms.

Upon the release of their final disc entitled The Machines of God, the Smashing Pumpkins decided to break up in 2000 and after their last show in December, the band members went their separate ways, much to the chagrin of their true fans such as myself. Since the break up, Corgan, a native of Chicago, had been collaborating with New Order before creating Zwan.

This Christmas, I was going through my old discs at home and relaxing to the sounds of the Pumpkins when a friend of mine messaged me over the internet, asking me if I had heard anything from Billy Corgan's new band. Once he told me Zwan was

Corgan's band and there were songs available on the internet to download, my excitement rose. Immediately I began to download my first Zwan song, and I was not disappointed.

Zwan has a unique sound largely thanks to the five member band that has three front-line guitarists. Corgan leads the band on guitar and vocals while former, on and off again, drummer for the Pumpkins, Jimmy Chamberlain backs him up on drums. The other band members are well-known artists themselves. Matt Sweeney, (guitarist) who hails from New Jersey, played with bands such as Skunk in the late 80's and early 90's, and later formed Chavez. David Pajo, (guitarist) from Kentucky, formerly played for Slint, and toured with Stereolab, Royal Trux, King Kong, Palace, Wild Oldham, Tortoise, and is currently a member of Papa M (formerly known as Aerial M). And on bass, A Perfect Circle's Paz Lenchantin was added in April of 2002.

The group started out playing clubs on open mike nights. Sweeney's older brother Jack Sweeney owns a club called the Hideout where the band first came together. Corgan was at the Hideout playing with a few other notables each week and once the word spread, fans were coming out of the woodwork to get a sneak peek at a possible new project for Corgan. When news had spread that Corgan and his new band Zwan were at the club and ready to perform, crowds began to pack the club hours in advance. On September 9th, upon the absence of Jack Sweeney who was reportedly watching a Rolling Stones concert, Corgan took the stage as the master of ceremonies to replace him. Throughout the night, fans were expecting to see Zwan get up on stage and give the fans their first taste of

the bands sound, but this did not happen as they hoped. Every member of Zwan was there and did perform, but they did so separately with other bands. Finally in April of 2002, Zwan made its debut at a club called Double Door.

Their first single and other media can be downloaded for free at Zwan's official website, www.zwan.com. They can also be heard on the radio now as the bands first single has been released. Honestly, is catchy and has a Smashing Pumpkinesque sound that quickly hits home. Although Honestly is the only official release by the band, other Zwan websites have downloadable versions of some other songs. The only problem is that these songs are live and you do not get the full experience of the band's sound. I do not know of any reported release date as of yet for their first album, but I'm sure it will be soon. The first album consists of fourteen tracks and is entitled Mary Star of The Sea and will be released on January 28th. Two editions of the album will be released, one normal disc and one including a DVD.

If Honestly is any indication of the sound Zwan will have, One can only expect the same type of mix of hard rock and heavy distortion that made the Smashing Pumpkins famous. Although Zwan and Smashing Pumpkins are two separate bands, Corgan is still at the helm and makes most of the decisions when it comes to the sound the songs take. He also writes, and has written more than 500 songs. I am anxious to hear the CD for the first time and hope it brings the joy the Pumpkins once did.



Deborah Cox – The Morning After

By Mat

All I can say right away is what a voice! This is one voice that is so full of deep and sultry soul that it will pull you in within seconds of listening. Her voice is what everyone in line to get on American Idol wishes they could sound like. There is such a strong, sexy quality to her vocals that she could be singing about clipping her toenails and people would still listen over and over.

The Morning After is an album that can easily be described as soulful slow jams or a great album to just downright get it on to. If you were to take all the Bump and Grind albums and combine them into one super-grind album, they still can't stand up to The Morning After.

Up & Down and Mr. Lonely, the two songs featured on the second bonus remix disc, are geared more towards club play, with a stronger beat and a very DJ friendly sound. They are songs that will definitely get some serious airplay, but it's tracks like 2 Good 2 Be True, Just a Dance and Oh My Gosh that have the slower, more intimate sound that will get people closer together, bumping and grinding like there is no one else around.

The thing that makes this album so much better than a lot of other R&B releases today is Deborah's voice. She has such a smooth voice that really adds to all the songs. Once you listen to the more soulful tracks like Play Your Part, Hurt So Much and the title track The Morning After that really bring forth her vocals, you will be converted into a fan. These tracks are the type that make you think of one thing and one thing alone. Just the three tracks I have listed here are enough to soften even the most jaded heart and make them melt in your hands.

The Morning After, if programmed in the proper order, could be one of the best seduction albums created. Every track makes you want to be close to someone and once you are overtaken by the lyrics, vocals and music, there is no doubt that some of the best action you have ever seen is in your future. I dare anyone to come up with a better album that is dripping with such seduction and raw emotion.

The Morning After is the one album that will not only have you grooving along with the beat, but also have you remembering the most sexual and seductive moments in your life. Deborah Cox's voice is pure love and sex. There really isn't much more you can ask for from an album like this. Well....maybe a guarantee that someone will be there to share in the emotion, but that's up to you.



Ours – Precious

By Mat

If you haven't heard Ours' 2000 release Distorted Lullabies yet, I am telling you to go out and get that album along with this one. This is one of those purchases you will not be disappointed with. It's the music just as much as the vocals of Ours that will make you a fan.

Lead singer Jimmy Gnecco has a very distinct sound to his vocals, sounding like Jeff Buckley and Rufus Wainwright, adding a little grunge emotion in for good measure. He has a rougher edge to his sound, with some of the screeching that used to come from Nirvana and Pearl Jam at the beginning, creating a more tortured rock sound.

The album begins with an edge with the more punk sounding Kill The Band, with a few glimpses of some Sex Pistols lingering in the sound. The album then delves into more of a straight rock sound, lead both by the great guitar work and Gnecco's vocals. Some songs emerge from their rock beginnings to an all out attack on the listener's senses as in the track Broken.

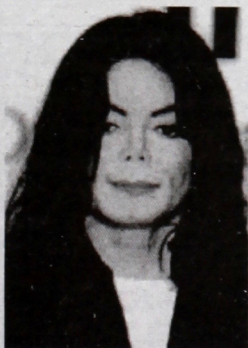
Broken begins as a slow, soft, almost accapella song that slowly moves onto an almost ethereal plain, floating higher and higher while the music builds and the vocals change from soft and soothing to a harder hitting tripped out track that makes you wonder if someone spiked the Kool-Aid you were drinking earlier. The song clocks in at around seven minutes, but tells a story from beginning to end, never leaving the listener any room to doubt the band's talent.

The underlying feeling that this album gives off is that of a really great band that you just happen across one night out at the bar. They still have that unpolished edge to them that makes them even more appealing. Listening to each track you can hear just how good these songs would sound live with the entire band, or just Gnecco alone with an acoustic on stage. This is the type of music I think of when people talk about 'college rock' which has become so popular with the likes of John Mayer and Dave Matthews. The only difference between Ours and those two is the edgier sound to the music and more experimental feel to so many of the tracks.

Precious is an album that you have to really experience alone with no distractions to fully appreciate. It is an album that should be listened to in its entirety and enjoyed as a whole. Ours may not be that big of a name in the music business, but they have a lot more talent and a better sound than most. Check it out!

Michael Jackson's Latest Plastic Surgery a Success!!!

BEFORE



Everyone has been slamming Justin Timberlake for wanting to be Michael Jackson. Well, in a strange twist of fate, Michael Jackson just emerged from Plastic Surgery looking exactly like Justin.

Experts are worried this could be the first in many strange Celebrity Surgeries. Anna Nicole Smith is rumored to be undergoing surgery to look more like Shamu the Killer Whale (as if she needs it)!



AFTER

Shut Up and Listen...



T.A.T.U. – 200 KM/H In The Wrong Lane

by Mat

If you look these girls up on the web, and ignore all the fan pages featuring their supposed lesbian lifestyle, you will come across the same quote over and over... "The hottest pop act in the world." Not bad for two girls who just broke onto the North American scene maybe a month ago.

Of course T.A.T.U. has been releasing CDs all over the world, but *200 KM/H in the Wrong Lane* is the first English language CD they've released. The CD has quickly caught on with people, as it stretches across a few musical boundaries, mixing styles together to create a pretty original sound.

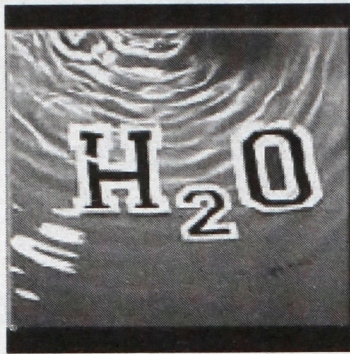
T.A.T.U.'s style can easily be described as techno-pop, but there is something more to their style. The girls have amazing voices which can not only pump out the faster beats, but also make tracks like *30 Minutes* stand out more for their lyrical styling than anything else.

The CD features 11 tracks as well as an enhanced section for your CD-ROM featuring the *All the Things She Said* music video, behind the scenes with Julia and Lena and an English language interview. All the tracks on the album are great in their own way, ranging from more of a club beat to the slower, ethereal, unheard of techno slow song.

Personally tracks like *Stars*, *30 Minutes* and *Clowns* are among my favorites as they have a bit of a slower beat, and aren't so techno, although *Clowns* does speed up and slow down at different points, giving the song more depth and character.

The first three tracks will be the track that will either make or break the album for you, but I don't know anyone who didn't like the album after hearing *Not Gonna Get Us*, *All The Things She Said* and *Show Me Love*. These three songs define the newer techno-pop style that T.A.T.U. have already mastered.

Club kids will love the new and distinctive beats that these girls have produced, pop lovers will love the new style they bring to their music, and guys... well, once you see what these two look like you will have no problem letting the girls listen to the album! *200 KM/H in The Wrong Lane* is available now and will probably be one of the major break-out albums of this year. Check it out!



H2O – All We Want

By Mat

Right away, I'm going to complain. This is a really good band, but they release a damn EP with only five tracks on it: three new studio tracks and two classic tracks recorded live during the summer of 2002. If you are going to release an album of live stuff, make sure there are more than just two tracks. This is the type of album that makes you head straight for your computer to download more.

H2O are part of the positive punk scene with a great punk sound, but vocals that are more polished and nice than most. The three new tracks by the New York band on the rise are your typical punk tracks with nothing that really makes them stand out from most of the other bands out there. Their more positive edge and sound seem more like a detriment to them.

Their live tracks sound more like rough studio recordings. Either the crowd was dead or they were more interested in getting the music and leaving out the actual live sound. This album isn't that bad, but I would recommend their older releases like *GO* if you are going to shell out the cash for one of this band's albums.



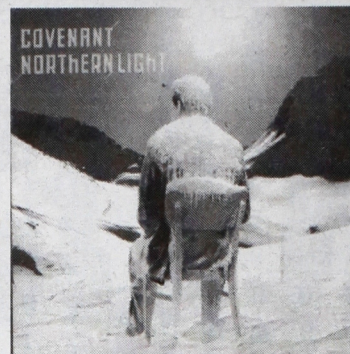
Coal Chamber – Dark Days

By Mat

This CD is rock at one of its hardest points before it crosses the line to the absurd. **Coal Chamber** comes at you with an album of some of the strongest, driving beats heard since Rob Zombie decided he wanted to be more mainstream.

Coal Chamber embodies the old-school rock style of deep, screaming voices, driving guitar riffs and a strong enough sense of the music that they are playing so when the songs speed up and slow down, they are dragging you along for the ride. The music pulls you in and really grabs a hold of you. They have the talent of Metallica with the harder edge of White Zombie. Tracks like *Watershed* and *Dark Days* really make the listener sit up and notice that it isn't just noise, but a carefully planned hard rock attack on your senses.

Dark Days is available now, but is probably best for those who like a harder edge. This isn't a beginner's album. You have to have an appreciation for this music to fully experience this album.



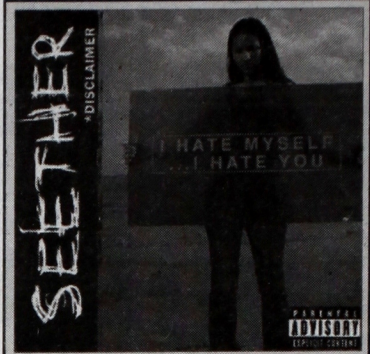
Covenant – Northern Light

by Mat

Northern Light is the latest release by **Covenant** who really came into the forefront with their last album *United States of Mind*, centering on the lyrics more than the music as the band continues on this album. They have steered away from their industrial sound and moved more towards a techno mixed with 80's synth-pop sounds. It may sound confusing, but you will understand when you hear it.

The album has some pretty fast tracks like *Call The Ships to Port* and *We Stand Alone* but it is tracks like *Bullet* and *Prometheus* that slow things down a bit and really show off what the band can do not only with the music, but vocally as well.

You have to be somewhat into this style of music or the album will be lost on you. For the non-techno fans out there, the album will come across as just another disc with the same beat and a different group. I will recommend this album to anyone who listened to and like the *BUSH – Deconstructed* album as it has the same sound and feel to it. It's different, but not for everyone.



Seether – *Disclaimer

by Mat

I love it when I put a CD aside for a while, not wanting to review it for lack of promotional material or any information, then go back to it about a month later giving it another chance and from the second I opened the plastic and put it in the CD player I knew this was going to be a great disc!

Seether is a South African trio who in their debut year has already been on the *Ozzfest Tour* and are already being compared to bands like **Nirvana** and **Pearl Jam**. Not bad for a group that could have been lost in the *Creed-Rock* era that seems to be killing rock as we know it. **Seether** breaks out of that mold and brings new life to the fading Grunge rock era with a harder, edger sound.

Many people first hearing this band may think that they are listening to either **Eddie Vedder** or **Gavin Rossdale**, but frontman **Shaun Morgan** really nails their sound with distinctive vocals that define the group, but also pay tribute to the masters of grunge.

There isn't a single track on this album that isn't good. *Gasoline* and *Needles* are the two tracks that will really grab people and drag them from their *Theory of a Nickel-Creed* coma and force them to listen to something real. The lyrics aren't positive and the songs are distinctive. Wow... what a change! **Seether** has brought back exactly what rock has been missing, the anger and angst of bands like **Rage Against the Machine** and **Nirvana** and the distinctive vocals of bands like **BUSH** and **Pearl Jam** mixed with the actual musical talent and writing ability that the music industry seems to forget about.

I could go on and on about this album, but your best bet (since rez blocked downloading) is to go out right now and get this album. This CD is going right into my collection with all my favorites from the early 90's and instead of collecting dust, it will be played more than a lot of the albums I have been sent in the last few years.

Seether's *Disclaimer is probably one of the best new rock albums released in the last few years. Check this one out. This is a must have for anyone who loves real rock!

The Revenge of The The s

By Chris Curry

It's not everyday that you get to hear someone onstage with a distorted electric guitar, stoned out of his mind and screaming incoherently into the microphone. Well, at least not since Kurt Cobain died. Oddly enough, this brand of music, made famous in the early nineties, is on its way back in with bands such as The Vines.

The Vines are a leader in the new wave of "The" bands, such as The Strokes, The Hives and The White Stripes. Although all of their sounds differ quite greatly, they all have one thing in common: they believe in the rebirth of rock and roll. Perhaps the clearest example of that would be the New York City based rockers, The Strokes. All of their band pictures look like they were taken directly out of 'How to be a Rock Star' magazine. They have the grungy clothes, the messed up hair, the haggard, hung over looks. And they also write some really good songs too. In the last few years, that hasn't been a very crucial element to rock stardom for some reason.

Although it may seem that The Vines have been an overnight success, overnight has been going on



since 1991, when Craig Nicholls, lead screamer and guitar player met bass player Patrick Mathews working at the local McDonald's in their homeland of Australia. At the time, we were obsessed with Nirvana, "recalls Mathews. The Verve were also cited as an inspiration for the band. However, it wasn't until 2000 that the band got their first break. The band did an interview on a Sydney radio station and they proceeded to play one of their songs and luckily a management team heard their song and helped them record and publicize their demos.

Since then, things seem to have been going pretty smoothly for the band. And luckily, Nicholls hasn't killed himself during any of his ill-

advised flights through the drum kit. The Strokes on the other hand, seem to be the quieter ones of the bunch, never causing much of a raucous, just delivering set after set of surprisingly pure music. The Strokes are a relatively new band, formulating in 1998 with a main goal of becoming a good rock and roll band. After being voted band of the year by SPIN magazine, it is plain to see that they have accomplished what they set out to do. The Strokes are lucky enough to have one of the most crucial elements to a successful band: best friends who enjoy the same kind of music. They are currently working on their second record and are hoping to back up the incredible debut success of 'Is This It'.



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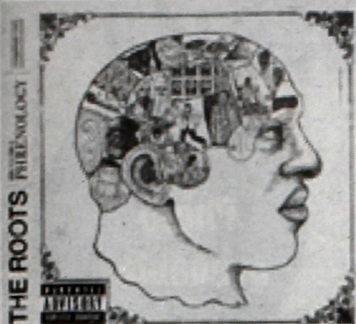
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MAT BURN

by Mat Thompson

If Christina Aguilera was to Marry Rev. Jessie Jackson... I Bet She Would Still Be Dirty!!!



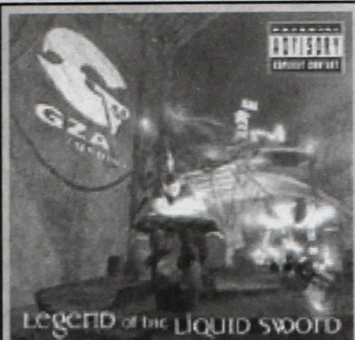
The Roots - Phrenology

by Cobb

This is one of the best albums to come out of 2002. It is almost indescribable how deep this album runs. The Roots have always been one of those intriguing hip hop acts. Not everyone would understand them, let alone listen to them. This was until they finally enjoyed pop success with their biggest selling album, *Things Fall Apart*. The Roots have released two discs since then, but the rumours of this masterpiece started rumbling, and *Phrenology* was one of the most anticipated albums of the year.

Phrenology, being the long discredited "science" of studying the bumps on people's heads to reveal their character, although, there is nothing that can be discredited about this disc. Every inch of the spectrum is explored, as The Roots journey through hip hop, funk, R & B, rock, and alternative. One of the tracks that really stood out on the album was, *The Seed (2.0)*, featuring up and comer Cody ChesnuTT. This rap/rock romp is upbeat and flows seamlessly with the emotionally immersed voice of ChesnuTT. *Break You Off* featuring Musiq is another outstanding track. It is quite possible to listen to it 50 times, and hear something new each time.

This album is as influential to the hip hop/urban scene of music as Coldplay's blockbuster *A Rush Of Blood To The Head* did on the rock scene. This is an essential ingredient to music lovers of all makes, shapes, and kinds.



GZA/Genius - Legend of the Liquid Sword

by Cobb

Few things are certain in life; Death, Taxes, Tuition, and Thursday night line-ups at the Pub. The degree of quality found within any Wu-Tang, or Wu-related album warrants the same level of certainty than any of the four aforementioned assurances. The Wu-Tang Clan will always release quality albums. It's true that this level will fluctuate up (*Wu-Tang Forever*) and down (*Killah Priest's Heavy Mental*), but the mean point of which it is fluctuating around, is a summit which other artists will only ever dream of reaching. The Wu-Tang clan is the most credible act in hip hop, and has been for at least the last 8 years.

With this in mind, **GZA** drops his third solo album, picking up with the *Legend of the Liquid Sword*. *Knock, Knock*, the first single, is completely representative of the album. *Knock, Knock* has a toned down *Breaker, Breaker* feel to it. The album is solid throughout, with quintessential Wu bangers, such as the title track, *Fam (members only)*, and *Auto Bio*.

This is a classic Wu-Tang album, incorporating definitive Wu beats, kung fu movie samples, and the distinctive flow of the **GZA**. The formula for success has been tested by the group in individual efforts before, and doesn't disappoint here. *Legend of the Liquid Swords* is one of the better solo releases, and a welcome addition to the extensive Wu-Tang library.



Swizz Beatz Presents Ghetto Stories

by Cobb

One of the things I love about hip hop, is the mix tape. The mix tape and the role of the DJ have taken enormous strides for the promotion of hip hop music. The mix tape acted as the Napster of old days, exchanging new music between listeners. Fast forward to the present, and that tape mixing kid has grown up, producing tracks for the likes of the **Ruff Ryders**, **P Diddy**, **Busta Rhymes**, **Nas**, **Snoop**, and **LL Cool J**. In the tradition of **Funkmaster Flex**, **DJ Red Alert**, and **DJ Clue**, **Swizz Beatz** tells us his version of the *Ghetto Stories*.

Hip Hop is an interesting genre, interesting in that a producer could not just give their tracks out to artists, and then recombine them on their own CD. The producer plays a different role when we're talking about other forms of music. **Swizz Beatz** is a prolific beat maker, whose fame has grown mainly out of the **Ruff Ryder** and **Roc-A-Fella** camps. The recruitment pool of artists to help tell the *Ghetto Stories* stretches all the way from the dirty south, to the west coast, and back to the home of hip hop, the East. **Swizz's** big symphony hip hop sound acts as an extravagant backdrop for **Eve**, **Bounty Killer**, **Baby**, **N.O.R.E.**, and **Shyne**, amongst others.

This album is like a Harlem Globetrotters versus And 1 Mix Tape all star showdown. Consider it the *Bling Shiny Tunes* of the hip hop world, definitely worth parting with \$20 for.



Headstones - The Oracle of Hi-Fi

by Mat

How could a new **Headstones** album come out without me knowing? Usually I know months before my favorite band comes out with a new album, but this time it slipped my attention. At first I was pissed, but then I heard the album and all I can say is Holy Shit!

The Oracle of Hi-Fi is probably the best album the **Headstones** have released since their debut album *Picture of Health*. Many **Headstones** fans out there are gasping at the fact that I could even say an album is even in the league of the album that brought us *Tweeter*, *Three Angels* and *Cemetery*, but you have to hear this album to completely understand.

Lead singer **Hugh Dillon** has a voice that defines the **Headstones'** style. They are still underground, old-school punk, but they have added a more mainstream rock sound that has somewhat regenerated and re-presented the band to the fans. To me these guys are the epitome of what Canadian music is all about. They have a great fan following, their shows are smaller, but packed, and their sound is pure.

The first single from *The Oracle of Hi-Fi* titled *Reframed* is a great **Headstones** track that will once again grab the attention of the listener wanting to hear more. Other tracks like *Whatchagonnado*, *Coffee Cup* and *Take It* will keep you listening, but there are a few tracks that will make you glad you bought the album.

Tiny Teddy is probably one of the best punk/rock tracks on the album, with the appeal and grab that they first had with *Tweeter* and *the Monkey Man*. While *Tiny Teddy* rocks that inner Candian Rock fan in al of us, the track that really completes the album is *Devil's Road*. The track is a slower acoustic track with only **Hugh Dillon** and a guitar. The song has the feel of a great live road tale. You can almost picture Dillon on a dark stage in a smokey bar, drinking a beer, smoking a cigarette and singing the song into a well used microphone while only the hardcore drinkers remain in the bar. It's like catching a glimpse into the mind of Dillon outside the harsh, punk exterior we usually hear.

I know I'm biased. I admit I'm the biggest **Headstones** fan and will love anything they record, but this album is a must have! *The Oracle of Hi-Fi* is, as I stated earlier, the best album the have produced since their first. The band gives you everything on this disc. Million dollar bands have nothing on **The Headstones**. Check it out and you'll see what I mean.



Tom Petty - The Last DJ

by Mat

Anyone out there surprised that I'm reviewing this album? Hmmm... 'there goes the last DJ, who played what he wanted to play and said what he wanted to say...' For some strange reason I feel a connection to this song. Weird!

The Last DJ is actually **Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers'** latest album that has a lot to say to a lot of people out there. Just the first two tracks really sum up the problems **Tom Petty** sees in the music industry. Read his interview with *Rolling Stone* and you will really see what I mean.

The Last DJ tells a tale like only Petty can. The song is a simple one telling the story of a DJ who refuses to bend to corporate demands, refusing to play the tracks that the record companies say are good. The DJ fights for his freedom, but in the end loses as most DJs do to the money-hungry management who claims to know what the people what to hear.

Track two tells the story of Johnny, a singer who was a small town boy who sang music that really grabbed his fans and told them a story. The song, titled *Money Becomes King*, follows the corporate rape of the artist as ticket prices raise, his songs are used to sell products no one really wants and he becomes a corporate sell-out singing *Light Beer* jingles and playing for suits instead of his true fans. This song is probably one of the best written songs I have heard in a long time. The song has a magic to it that really grabs your attention.

The rest of the album is pure **Tom Petty**, giving you his thoughts and views on different issues, but really centering on all the different aspects of music and the music industry. *Dreamville* will really grab you as classic Petty and the track *Joe* is a great blues style rock track carving the heads of the music industry. The lyrics to *Joe* makes me wonder how he actually got this album released.

The CD also includes a bonus DVD which is worth the money all on it's own. The DVD features an interview with Petty which is shown in segments between studio performances of almost all the tracks on this album. The live performances are great and Petty has a lot to say about not only his songs, but music in general. The DVD is a must have for real music lovers.

Of all the CDs I reviewed in this paper, I have to say this is the one album that people need to sit down and really listen to. *The Last DJ* is probably the closest thing to a perfect album I have come across in a long time! You have to hear this album to understand how good it really is. Go get it...

GWAR: Ultimate Video Gwarchive DVD

by Hugh

People over the years have attacked Marilyn Manson for being evil and disgusting and have classified him as a shocker rocker. I am assuming that these critics have over looked a rather unique group in the form of **GWAR**.

Just to give you a little background on the group, **GWAR** consists of 8 members. This bad is unique in the way that they wear full body costumes when they perform. There's *Oderus Urungus*, *BalSac the Jaws of Death*, *Beefcake the Mighty*, *Flattus Maximus*, *Jizmak Da Gusha*, *Slymenstra Hymen*, *Sexicutioner*, *Sleazy P. Martini*. Each of them is dressed almost as demon-like creatures and they all look like they have crawled out of a comic book.

What is really fun about this group is that their music style seems to change every song. They can have a hard metal ring to them, next a punk sound and they have even recorded some ballets. To put it mildly they are just plain weird. But weird doesn't have to be a bad thing. In this case it works best for entertainment.

This DVD contains every single **GWAR** video that has ever been created as well as some live performances. If you have a chance to see **GWAR** live, make sure you're far back from the stage. This is just a suggestion as the band likes to "kill" their enemies on stage and the crowd gets covered in fake blood. I mean it, many of these videos show them skinning and eating their human and animal enemies. There is no shortage of guts and blood either.

If you aren't at the weak of heart then I suggest picking this DVD up. It is fun and the music could be on any radio station today. Just keep in mind that these videos will appeal to your dark side so if you get offended easily or grossed out too, don't watch this DVD.



Uncle Kracker – No Stranger to Shame

By Mat

Now here is a guy who broke through on the coat-tails of Kid Rock, but broke out with his own style of music that has really grabbed people's attention. **Uncle Kracker** is one of those artists who love music and it comes through in all his tracks.



When you listen to this album you immediately draw a connection to Kid Rock, but instead of the strong rock/rap connection that Kid brings out in his music, **Uncle Kracker** keeps a predominant old-school rock style mixed in with the modern dance beat and a very strong country and Western influence.

Track by track you can dissect this album by influences and styles, but when you put it back together you have one hell of an album. I was shocked when I listened to this album and liked it so quickly. There isn't a track on this album that's bad.

Keep it Comin' kicks the album off with a bang, much more along the lines of Kid Rock's rock and rap style, but immediately the album moves to a more blues/country style with tracks like *Thunderhead Hawkins*, the first single *In A Little While* and *I Wish I Had a Dollar*. **Uncle Kracker** has such a great classic rock/country sound to his voice that makes the songs sound more like personal stories than just tracks on an album. He sings about love, partying and memories, which is a big change in the music industry today.

A nice surprise on the album is the classic hit *Drift Away* showing Kracker's Motown roots. *Drift Away* is one of those songs you will hear and it will drive you nuts over who sang it. Well, *Drift Away* was originally performed by Dobie Gray, but has been covered by many others (including one of *The Seven Demons of Rock*, Rod Stewart). This is one of those songs that's about the music and the lyrics just pull you in mind and soul. They say it perfectly in the lyrics 'Gimmie the beat boys and free my soul, I wanna get lost in your Rock n' Roll and Drift Away.'

Another track on the album that will really pull people in is *Letter to My Daughter* which I think if released and promoted properly could be #1 on the Rock, Pop and Country charts at the same time. The song is exactly what the title says, it's a letter to his young daughters Skyler and Madison that should pull at the heartstrings of anyone with a shred of emotion in their body. This song is so full of emotion and sentiment that it is easily the best song on the album and one of the best songs recorded in the last few years.

This album has everything. It may sound strange that **Uncle Kracker**, the redneck friend of Kid Rock has created such a great album, but you have to listen to it to fully understand. Anyone who really appreciates music will not only hear the songs, but they will be fully immersed in the talent, emotion and pure love of music that comes across on every track. I guarantee you *No Stranger to Shame* is one of the best albums of 2002.



Finch – What it is to Burn

By Mat

Have you ever come across a band that has talent, but seems to have a real problem with nailing down their style? It's not that their style is so new that you have to listen to them a few times to really get it, but the band seems to still be testing the waters as to what they should sound like. **Finch** has this problem. Maybe you can help them out.

The album has a very predominant modern punk sound that would catch on with a lot of people, but when a lot of their songs hit the chorus, the lead singer falls into the screaming heavy metal trap which doesn't at all flow with the music. On top of that the music is a mixture of modern punk and some parts of 1980's pop-rock. I think it's the cheesy harmony that the band tries for just before the lead singer explodes on the mic.

The music is pretty basic, driven by the guitar work and held together by the ever changing vocals. It just doesn't make that much sense musically. They seem like they have been listening to the Green Day catalogue for too long now and think that that is the only way punk music should sound. Of course the lead singer sounds like he has a hard-on for old Henry Rollins and some Saliva.

I don't know about this album. I didn't like the latest Sum 41 album, but I would rather spend my money on that than this wannabe album. They sound like an up and coming band that will never really make it over that last hurdle to reach the top. It just isn't that good of an album.



Robbie Williams – Escapology

by Mat

Yes, I admit it... I am a **Robbie Williams** fan. The guy is a self-centered, egotistical artist who can back up anything he says and break records with every album he releases.

Escapology is his latest release of original songs since his *Sing (not Swing) When You're Winning* album. On *Escapology* Robbie has returned to his Brit-pop roots, but still mixes in a little of his passion for the swing era. One thing that really stand out on the album is the use of the acoustic guitar more than the dance beats from the last album. The acoustic really brings something extra to Robbie's already great vocals.

Tracks like *Sexed Up*, *Something Beautiful* and *Hot Fudge* will keep the longtime Robbie fans happy while *Revolution* and *Me and My Monkey* show Robbie's talent to branch out and try something new.

At first I didn't know what to think of this album, but after listening to it a few times, it really propels itself in a new direction for Robbie as he branches out into classic rock, pop, blues and swing and he ends the album with a great ballad dedicated to his Nan. Ignoring his *Swing* album (check that one out!!!), this is probably the best North American release yet by **Robbie Williams**.



Road Cone – For The Ride Home

This debut album released in August 2002, is definitely one for the ages. Put together on a relatively low budget, *For The Ride Home* has really put **Road Cone** on the map. The Kingston trio of guitarist **Brian Fraser**, guitarist **Scott Gregory**, and Drummer **Cameron Tomsett** combines a mix of edgy originals with a few excellently portrayed covers to produce a well rounded work of art. The first single, *Ceramic Dwarf*, is a clever punk song written about the awesome power possessed by garden gnomes. That, combined with fan favorite *Santa Likes*, powers a CD that may some day be considered one of the greatest CDs of the new millennium, if not of all time.

Drummer and Producer Cameron Tomsett calls their debut CD a "great blend of different styles of music. We each have our separate musical tastes and influences and that allowed us to really put together a complete master piece." Coming off a successful tour of Japan you can expect great things in 2003 from **Road Cone**. A CD entitled *Live in Japan*, which includes many of their songs performed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is due out in summer 2003. Also coming up is some recording time for their sophomore album due out at Christmas 2003. Expect even bigger and better things from Kingston's next big band soon.

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Whitney – Just Whitney...

By Mat

Just kill me! Just hit me in the head with a hammer and get it over with! Why the hell does **Whitney** keep releasing albums? This woman should be in Vegas, and I don't mean on stage. I picture her and Bobby out back of one of the big hotels performing their songs for crack.

"And I-ee-I, will always, smoke glue... oooh oooh!"

Does she have a great voice? I guess, but come on... you can hear the desperation above anything else(other than the background sounds of a warm crack pipe). It's like the whole *Vanilla Ice* thing... sure, you can make another album but no one other than the inbred and the destitute really give a rat's ass!

Some artists should just go away, but for some reason record companies, and the damn paramedics, keep reviving this woman! And hey, this CD comes with a bonus DVD. I hear they screwed up the footage and instead of backstage footage of Whitney, it is actually home-made porn tapes of Whitney and all the original members of New Edition (except Devoe... you know about Devoe). The DVD will be a collectors item for lovers of bad music and dirty, dirty sex!

Please someone end this torture! Hey Bobby, I'll give you forty bucks and a dime bag if you off her!



Did You Know...

Robbie Williams Used to be part of the Boy-Band TAKE THAT? I wonder if he ever hung out with Michael Jackson?

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DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL

By Chris Curry

The past year in rock music has not been solely dominated by the "The" bands, such as The Strokes, The Vines, The Hives and The White Stripes. Dashboard Confessional have quickly made an impression on the music buying public in the last year with their new brand of acoustic driven, tear jerking, hold your lover's hand and never let go blend of melodies.

Songs such as Screaming Infidelities and Again I Go Unnoticed have proven that bands no longer have to succumb to what is going on in popular music in order to be successful. The band's undisputed leader, Chris Carrabba, has been playing guitar since the age of fifteen, when his uncle Angelo bought him a guitar. Too busy with skateboarding, he never took the instrument seriously until the end of high school.

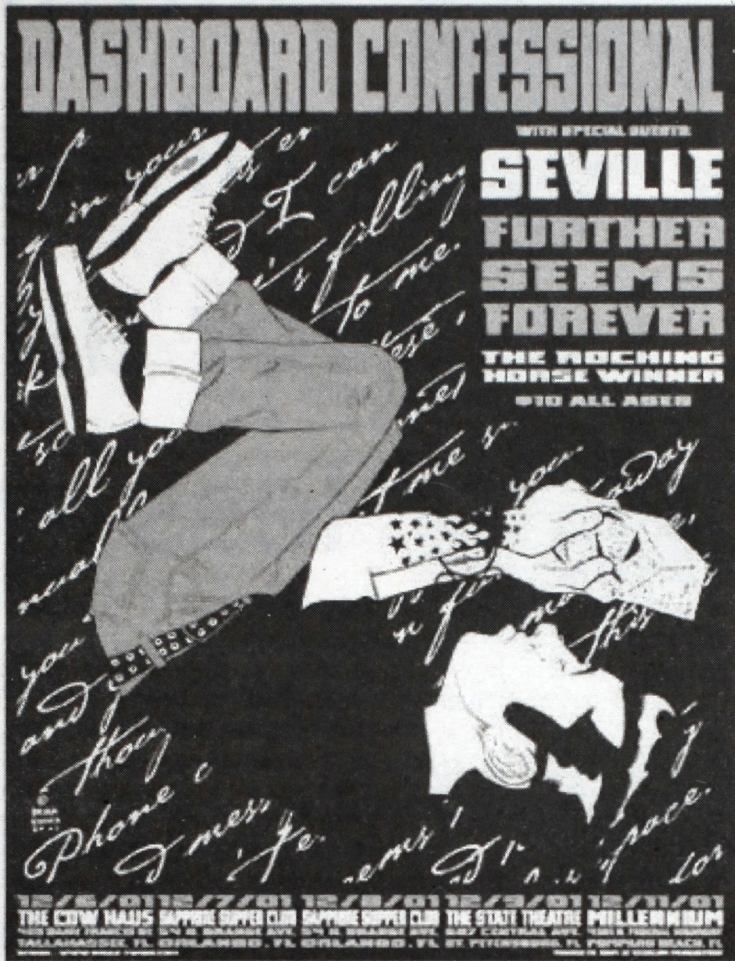
Carabba then moved on to work with The Vacant Andy's and Further Seems Forever. It was during his stint in FSF that he decided to take a chance with a solo acoustic sound. For Dashboard Confessional, audience participation has always been a big part of the live show. On stage, as evidenced in their MTV Unplugged CD and DVD, Carabba can be heard encouraging the crowd to join in and lend their voices. Eerily enough, it seems as though there is not one person in the crowd that cannot chant each note, from a beautiful whisper to a throat-wrenching scream.

"If you come to one of my shows, you're kind of expected to sing along as loud as I do," Carabba said on the band's official website.

Having grown up in Florida, Carabba still tries to maintain his roots with the people that have helped him launch his career. "I think the kids in Florida are just different kinds of fans. They really support their bands. I'm one of those kids, so it's nice to see," said Carabba.

It is not only in Florida that Carabba feels a deep emotional connection to his fans. "It seems that the rest of the country is taking a nod from the kids down here. On my last tour, kids treated me as if, literally, they're my buddies and they're rooting for me. And they really connected," he said.

Although Carabba writes all of the songs for the band, the albums just wouldn't have the same majestic flair without a little help from his friends. Jolie Litdholm, the lead singer of The Rocking Horse Winner, lends her beautiful voice to a few tracks on the album, 'The Places You Have Come to Fear the Most.' Dan Bonebrake, who played with Carabba in The Vacant Andy's, donates his talent on bass and Mike Marsh from The Agency drops some perfectly flowing beats on the drums, to add a little more essence to an already powerful set of well-written acoustic guitar melodies. The Dashboard Confessionals are currently on tour in Europe before heading back to the studio to record their third album.



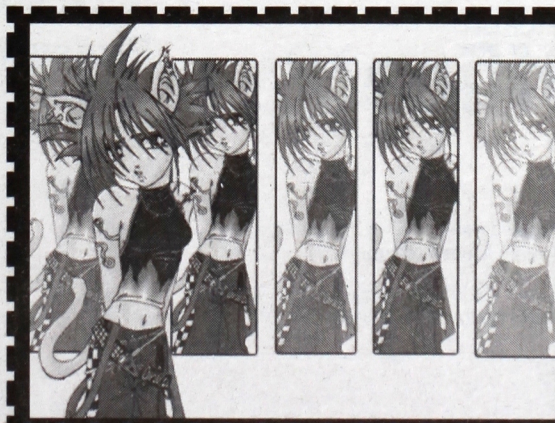
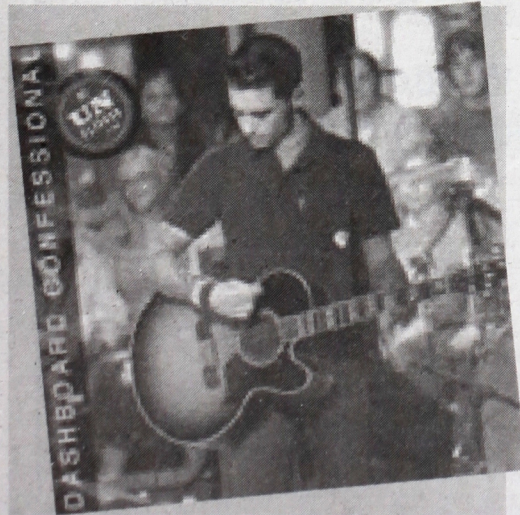
Dashboard Confessional - MTV Unplugged

by Cobb

We all know that record companies are doing whatever they can to sell CDs, including everything from movie tickets to magazine subscriptions to DVDs. The amount of content on most of these DVDs are usually about as minimal as a Christina Aguilera dinner plate. Starve no longer, music lovers, included with the 52 minute concert CD, is the DVD video version which aired on MTV. Now that's what I call a bonus disc.

This may not be the greatest introductory disc to the charismatic confessions of Dash front man, Chris Carrabba. What this disc accomplishes is exactly what you'd expect; it transports the listener to a small venue, with a small group of friends, who couldn't be happier to be there. Audience participation is present and encouraged, as Chris often pulls away from the mic, leaving the crowd to belt out the chorus. To really appreciate his lyrical prowess, pick up one of his studio releases. The 15 song concert obviously doesn't include all his work, but the collection he presents is very representative. Chris and his band sing along with the audience as the intimate TRL environment is filled with sounds of The Best Deceptions, Turpentine Chaser, The Brilliant Dance, and Screaming Infidelities. Branded as one of the leaders of the new "Emo" genre, it appears he will not be a musical martyr, with his inspiring and insightful lyrics.

As the Dashboard Confessional stock rises, fans will cherish the experience presented here in the most comprehensive Unplugged session to date. I'd recommend this CD, but the inclusion of the DVD makes it a must have.



Tim McGraw & The Dancehall Doctors

by Mat

The other day I was watching television and on one of the stations was a Tim McGraw concert. Since there was nothing else on, I decided to watch it. The concert was so good that I went out and bought this album right after it ended (well... after I went to McDonalds for food).

Tim McGraw & The Dancehall Doctors is the latest album by the man who is not only one of the best country singers around, but also the hero of every straight man in the world (see Faith Hill...). The album is packed with 15 tracks which range from pure country, to classic rock, to a great cover that you would never expect a country singer to perform.

One of the main draws of this album is a good number of slower songs with great stories behind them. Unlike most music today, country music has more of a story behind it and the writing is something that will draw you to the songs. Tracks like Red Ragtop and That's Why God Made Mexico really hit home while She's My Kind of Rain slows it down, giving you a love song that comes straight from the heart.

The one song that really stood out for me is Tim's cover of Elton John's Tiny Dancer. He really hits it right on the nail with this song by only adding a small amount of country sound, keeping the classic 70's sound intact. Even non-country fans will like this track. The album crosses musical borders creating a very easy album to listen to.

Tim McGraw & The Dance Hall Doctors is available now and a must for country fans. I highly recommend this album, even if only for Tiny Dancer and Mexico.

Faith Hill
+ Water
=
BLENDED's
Favorite
Picture!!!



Did You Know...
Listening to O-Town and watching Japanese Anime at the same time will propell you through the Third Portal of Hell? Seriously! We knew a guy, who knew this girl who babysat a kid who it happened to!



Coldplay - A Rush Of Blood To The Head

by Cobb

"We wanted to be a reaction against soulless rubbish." These words by Coldplay frontman Chris Martin act as a credo for the band, in a mission statement type fashion.

The long awaited sophomore album, A Rush Of Blood To The Head, finds its place on the shelves after almost a year's worth of delays. In keeping with their modus operandi of being involved with all aspects of production, they took the album back to the studio after finishing recording in late October 2001, because the feel was just not there.

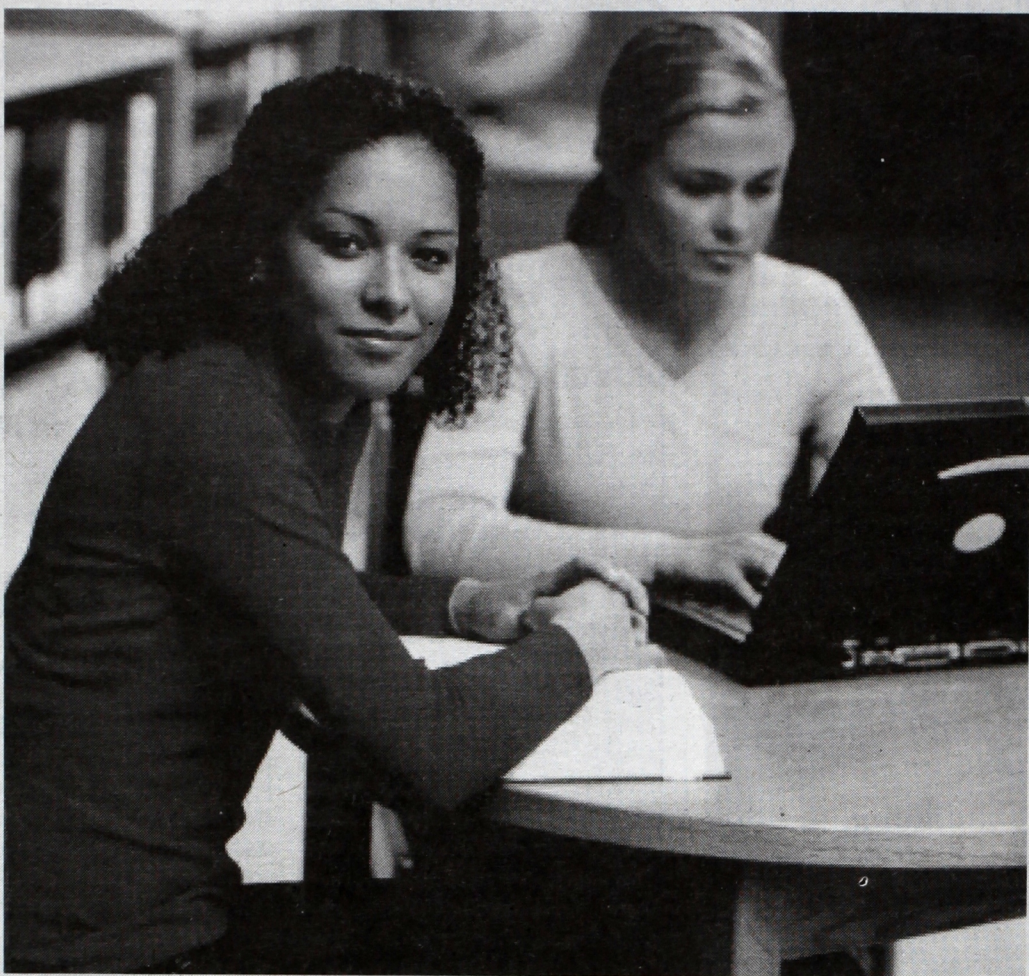
The offspring of this labour of love, for the quartette from University College of London, is a fantastic follow up to the globally acclaimed Parachutes. I can say without hesitation that this offering is better and more complete than Coldplay's first born. After just one listen, you can hear the single potential in the first 5 or 6 tracks. The first single, In My Place, has already enjoyed some success, but not that of their breakout hit Yellow. A harder sounding song, when put into the perspective of a Trouble, or Shiver, the most notable change it seems, if we were to judge the disc by the first single, is an increased emphasis on percussion. The drums throughout have more of a raw sound to them.

The drums featured on the disc, almost sound like they are at home with the "The's" genre, which includes the likes of; The Strokes, The Hives, The White Stripes, etc. But Coldplay ties to its nu-Brit pop invasion genre are prevalent, staying comparable with the likes of Travis and Radiohead.

A welcome return through sporadic parts of the album is the piano styling of Martin. This sound is unique and now identifiable as Coldplay-esque. This style is exemplified on The Scientist, which for the first minute and a half, the listener is entertained by just Martin's voice, and his piano. The simple sounding beginning of the song slowly transforms with the addition of acoustic guitar, drums, and finally electric guitar, finally ending in what seems to be a musically exhausted sigh. The listener is quickly picked back up by the quicker tempo of Clocks, led again by Martin's piano.

Start to finish, this is a great album. Flawless transitions from slow to, well, not as slow, make this very easy to digest. The instrumentation blends together well, considering they are not usually found together. Coldplay has definitely found its place.

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